



Zionism

AND

The Western Jew.

A Symposium

read before the

LONDON ZIONIST LEAGUE,

on the 24th December, 1908,

by

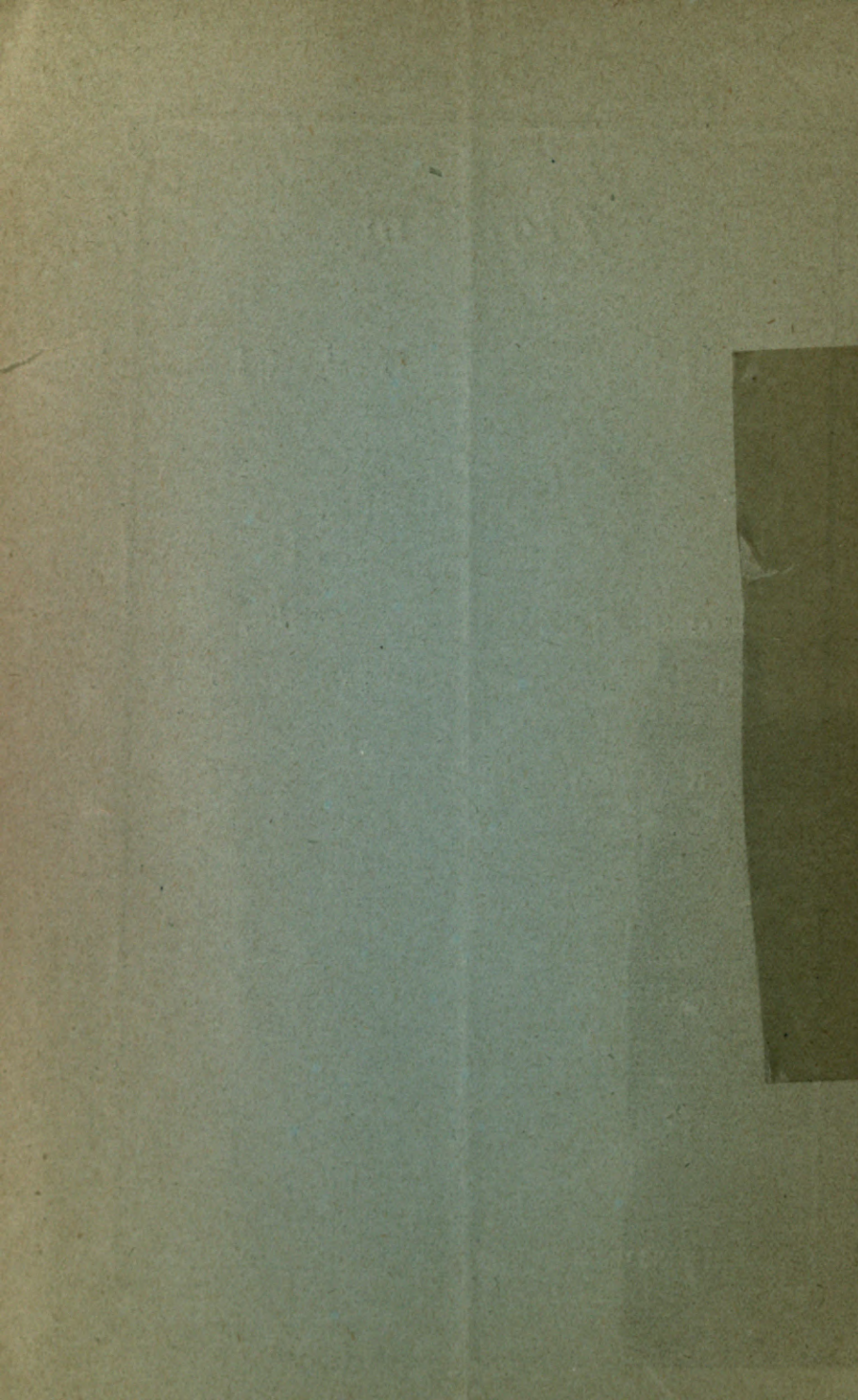
JACOB ALEXANDER, of the Oxford
University Zionist Society,

CYRIL M. PICCIOTTO, of the Cambridge
University Zionist Society,
and

LEON SIMON, B.A., of the Oxford
University Zionist Society.

PRICE 6d.

Printed and Published by
H. GINZBURG, 36, LEMAN STREET, ALDGATE, E.



Zionism
AND
The Western Jew.


A Symposium

read before the

LONDON ZIONIST LEAGUE,
on the 24th December, 1908,

by

JACOB ALEXANDER, of the Oxford
University Zionist Society,

CYRIL M. PICCIOTTO, of the Cambridge
University Zionist Society,

and

LEON SIMON, B.A., of the Oxford
University Zionist Society.

PRICE 6d.

Printed and Published by
H. GINZBURG, 36, LEMAN STREET, ALDGATE, E.

CONTENTS.

Introduction, by PAUL GOODMAN	page 3
Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces, by JACOB ALEXANDER ..	5
The Application of Great Thought to Zionism, by CYRIL M. PICCIOTTO ..	12
The Need for Emancipation, by LEON SIMON ..	18

INTRODUCTION.

These papers are both a sign of the Jewish times and an encouragement to Zionist hopes. As the *Aufklaerungsperiode* in the eighteenth century, which brought the Jews under the influence of modern European civilization, went along its triumphant course in spite of the most determined general opposition, so the present Nationalist tendency in Jewry is irresistibly spreading its forces throughout the whole Dispersion. The old outlook, which has served an indispensable function in the economy of the Jewish people, is, consciously or subconsciously, everywhere giving way to the new order of things. But whereas the period of adaptation and assimilation began with Moses Mendelssohn and a few other choice spirits, and only slowly made its way through the masses, it is now the latter, representing as they do among the Jews the keenest and surest instinct of self-preservation, that have first espoused the cause of Jewish regeneration in the historic Land of Israel, and it is on this broad basis that Jewish intellectuals have built up the present Zionist movement and organization.

While Zionism has thus created a fruitful hope both for the toiler and the thinker, it has also become a sun and a shield to those who are beset by the great dissolving forces which are attacking Judaism under Western civilization. It is this problem to which the present publication is addressing itself. The Zionist idea has for some time been the only Jewish ideal which has effectively appealed to the thousands of Jewish students at the Continental Universities. It is due to Zionism, which, in the memorable words of Theodor Herzl, spells the return to Judaism before the return to

the land of the Jews, that the heart of the children has turned to their fathers. The waves of the flowing Zionist tide have now reached the Universities of England and the Jewish students there are also moved by the new Jewish spirit which has imperceptibly come over them. Without the impulse of persecution or social ostracism, these Jewish University men seek to fathom the problem of the future of their people, and this Symposium provides an indication of their endeavours after the Jewish life.

PAUL GOODMAN,

London Zionist League.

Hon. Secretary.

* * * The proceeds of the sale of this pamphlet, the publication of which is due to Mr. Samuel Goldreich, will be devoted to the Jewish National Fund.

CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES

By JACOB ALEXANDER.

Mercifully for you and for me, the question before us is limited in more ways than one. First, it is not concerned with Zionism in general. When Jews meet together to discuss Zionism, they are apt—not without some justification—to take the whole world into their purview and make the cosmos a mere annexe of Jewry. Hence such deliberations are often protracted and sometimes vague. But to-night we are trying to find what is the meaning and value of Zionism to a particular type of Jew. Secondly, those whom I have the honour of addressing may be assumed, if not to accept, at any rate to be aware of the broad postulates on which the exposition of any phase of Zionism must rest; so that a good deal may be taken for granted which in an ordinary assembly would have to be clearly demonstrated before any further progress could be made. Thirdly, and above all, I am strictly limited as to time.

The radical pre-supposition of Zionism is, of course, that all is not right with us—that there is a Jewish Question. Some few hold that the present state of Jewry is its normal and natural condition; but most Jews are of the less optimistic way of thinking. The question then is—how are we to change an abnormal and anomalous into a normal and natural polity?

Zionism, as a means to this end, is a gem of many facets. It recommends itself variously to various individuals according as temperament, or association, or philosophy, or what not, tends to make them emphasize one side of it or another. But whether racial, religious, cultural or political, the appeal is always, in the last resort, to the same prime motor—the instinct of self-preservation. The Jewish people, ever since it became

a people, has had its back to the wall, fighting an unequal fight against overwhelming odds. National disaster killed our national self-respect; dispersion and persecution drove us in upon ourselves, and stunted our physical, mental and moral growth; and now, in these latter days, the sun of freedom is doing what, after all, the storms of persecution failed to do. The East wind in the fable only made the man wrap his cloak closer round him, whilst the sun's heat made him discard it. In the same way, adversity and ostracism intensified, while they narrowed, our corporate life; prosperity and equality are tending to dissipate it altogether. The Jew has benefited at the expense of his Jewishness: and the latter is the more vitally important of the two. Thus the best friends of the Jew are the worst enemies of the Jews.

But these forces from without have generated almost equally pernicious forces from within. We have been told so long that we are an inferior order of beings that we have almost come to believe it; and what hope is there for a people that despises itself? In one of his ethical classifications, Aristotle contrasts the boastful man, who rates himself higher than his deserts, with what he calls the "ironical," and we should call the "self-depreciatory" man, who rates himself lower than his deserts. With all his penetration, Aristotle could not be expected to have conceived of a third category, consisting of men who accept the contemptuous estimate formed of them by others.

Of all the bitter fruits of this fatal seed, the bitterest surely is the widely-held doctrine of assimilation, a creed of which it is difficult to speak with patience, whether as an individual with some respect for logic, or as a Jew. It embodies the extraordinary attitude taken up by the self-styled "representative Jew,"—that is, the Jew who represents any rather than the

Jewish attitude. Assimilation is the term correlative to the phrase, now, happily, by way of being discredited, "an English gentleman of the Jewish persuasion"; and the reward of those whom it represents is to be spoken of by English gentlemen not of the Jewish persuasion as "almost like one of ourselves." In them there goes on a dual process of Anglicisation and dejudaisation. On the religious side, the same is true: corresponding to so-called Anglo-Jewishness is so-called orthodoxy. There is only one form of orthodoxy—that, namely, which is usually called ultra-orthodoxy. Now this last,—the religion of the "Oriental Israelite Hebrew Jew,"—is becoming extinct; the official orthodoxy of to-day, however closely it adheres to the letter, has lost all the old orthodox spirit.

The general slackness and debilitation, on the two aspects of which I have touched, and for which the spirit of Anglicisation run wild is mainly responsible, have given rise to a general sense of instability and insecurity, but not to a general desire for betterment. Stolid dissatisfaction is the prevailing tone in Anglo-Jewry. The general policy is a policy of drift. But this is tantamount to a tacit support of the assimilative tendencies: the set of the current is plain to see and yet nothing is done to stem it. Herzl had a pungent phrase to describe this attitude of mind: he spoke of "the efforts of amphibious-minded men to combine ancient tradition with an exaggerated imitation of national customs." That is to say, the English Jew wants to justify his double-barrelled appellation and have it both ways. Nothing is more certain than that in so doing he is riding for a fall. The pure stream of Jewry undefiled is being carried out to the high seas, to the welter of cosmopolitanism on the one hand and irreligion on the other, which the general laxity of the age is tending to produce; and he lets himself go with the stream.

The problem of the destiny of the Western Jew has thus reached an acute stage. The component elements of Jewish life are flying apart or dissolving. To save ourselves alive we must do something. If we lose our sense of community—and we are losing it fast—we are lost ourselves; that fatal genius for adaptability, which has passed into a proverb, and which has manifested itself in Jews of all ages, from the authors of Genesis down to the humblest street-corner Meshumad, will prove itself a Danaan gift indeed. Salvation can only come from our countervailing characteristic of solidarity, which, however, as I have tried to show, is being undermined from within and without at once. It is then the task of the Western Jew of to-day, if he desires a better fate than a painless euthanasia in the Lethal chamber of tolerance and enlightenment, to enquire a little more closely into the reasons for this solidarity, and then deduce the right way of preserving and, if possible, intensifying it.

What is the meaning of Jewish solidarity? It means that the Jews have certain institutions, characteristics and instincts in common, which are endowed with a vitality more than the average; that certain features of Jewish life and thought have survived millenniums, not merely of vicissitudes but of such misfortunes as would have exterminated or transmogrified most other races in the course of a few centuries. Now, if we can show that these bonds which have kept us together so effectively are the very same as those which have at all times been the conditions of national life, and whose weakening or removal has been always accompanied by a proportionate weakening of national characteristics and institutions, we shall have made out a strong case for Jewish nationalism. And surely such is the case. Political science recognises two sort of bonds in a state, natural ties and artificial ties. The natural, ties are race

language, religion, sentiment or association, and land. Of these we retain almost entirely our purity of stock, a fact testified to not only by history, but by anthropology; we retain, for certain purposes, our original tongue, and, if necessity arose, could easily revive its use for all purposes of intercourse; we retain our religion; we retain our common sentiment, which, only fully alive in some, and more or less dormant in many, is never entirely eradicated. All we have not retained is the land, and that is inessential to the general principle of nationalism; and though Zionism proper is bound up with Palestine, the vital point is that we have at least the territorial tradition and sentiment that encompass it. Thus all the essentially natural ties of a state are still ours. The artificial ties, law, custom and executive, we can, of course, hardly expect to find in a community which is a nation only *in posse* and not *in esse*. But the very considerable survival of old custom and of Jewish law, civil and ecclesiastical, proves not only the strength of these ties in the past, but the ease with which they could be at any time recreated. Thus that community which persists among the Jews of the Dispersion is a community of nationhood. To save this community from lapsing we must set Jewish life again on its only rational basis: and that basis, to be rational, must be national. Of all the solutions yet propounded of the Jewish Question, Zionism is the only one which satisfies this indispensable condition. The time has gone by for transcendental talk about our mission, talk which has received its hall-mark as an "ism" during the last generation. The Missionists claim that Israel's destiny is to testify, both by utterance and by conduct, to the eternal verities of Judaism: they preach the gospel of a Judaism spelt, as it were, with a small "j," a philosophic system, not a creed. Such a doctrine of philosophic Theism, however strongly tinged with race

feeling, must tend to become indistinguishable from the neological tendencies in modern Christianity. The relegation of Jewish life as such to a secondary place would stimulate intermarriage, the most powerful solvent of racial characteristics; and the result would ultimately be absorption—the movement thus stultifying itself by causing the disappearance of the Jews themselves, who were to have been the means to its end. I am the last to deny that the Jews have a distinctively religious, or at least ethical, mission; as Zangwill makes Heine say, “the Jewish mission will never be over until the Christians are converted to the religion of Christ.” But to advocate a means of impressing our religious individuality on others which will lead to the disappearance of that individuality itself is the supremest folly. Our appeal, religious or ethical, must, can only, be made by us as a community visibly governed by certain principles of conduct and belief, not as scattered units, however earnest and inspired. As things are, no one can really *live* Judaism. We want the opportunity of living it; that life will be the only revelation, the only message, which we can give the world. And Zionism is the expression of this view. It proclaims boldly that Judaism does not propose to “die that it may live,” but to preserve its life by not losing its life. It is literally the revival of Judaism: and so its work for the present must be that of regeneration; “it must recreate the Jewish consciousness before it can create the Jewish state.” That it is already doing this there are many indications; the re-awakened study of the Hebrew language and of Hebrew literature, and the new interest in things Jewish on the part of many semi-detached Jews—if they may be so called—these are among the signs of the times: and they point to the beginning of a process which is bound to gather momentum in geometrical ratio as time goes on. When this work of renewal is complete, and not till then, when Judaism has found

itself, and the Jewish *soul* has been redeemed from Golus, can Judaism hope to resume its mission. In the interim to talk of the Jewish mission is a mere preacher's license. Israel may be the chosen instrument for the new and final redemption; but, if that is so, then to that very end it is essential that it should first effect its own redemption and live again its own life.

This week we are doing honour to the memory of the Maccabees. A more fitting occasion for the discussion of our subject could hardly have been chosen. Not the modern Maccabeans, so called, it would seem, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, who meet together to celebrate the achievements of Jews in the Gentile world, but the old heroes of our race, who rolled back the tide of bastard Hellenism which threatened to overwhelm the old Hebraic virtues and genius, should be our models and exemplars. Our ancestors sixty generations back were intellectual infants, and the strong wine of Greek art and philosophy would have destroyed their mental balance: it is for us, who, in common with the rest of the twentieth century, are intellectually adult, to act like Milton's virtuous man, "to see and know and yet abstain." "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," is the watchword of the present age. Let us Jews by all means learn all we can from the Western culture and civilisation which lie ready to our hand: but let us realise first that it can never enter into, and become part of, our spirit in the fullest measure; and, secondly, that, if it could, it would be purchased too dearly, since the price we should have to pay for it would be the stifling within us of that Jewishness which is innate in us as no other influence is, or can, ever be. It is a grim fate to have "ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes," and then to discover that in the process one has lost one's innermost soul. From such a fate only the Maccabean spirit can save us.

THE APPLICATION OF GREEK THOUGHT TO ZIONISM.

By CYRIL M. PICCIOTTO.

I am going to ask you to-night to consider one problem of Zionism which has hitherto not been weighed with that care and exactness which we Zionists have accorded to problems presented by our movement far less subtle, far less elusive, a problem moreover really hard of solution and one concerning which it is of vital importance that we should arrive at, and adopt, a definite view. I refer to the influence of English University life upon the Zionist idea, or, to put the case more clearly and perhaps more simply, How far precisely may the Zionist merge himself in an alien culture, and assimilate alien ideals, without the emperilment of his Zionism and of his fealty to the cause. I make so bold as to think that the consideration of this point will be not without interest to you as Zionists, because of the very definite policy that the movement has adopted towards University culture and its relation to Zionism; insisting and throwing emphasis upon its value, regarding it as the preliminary training for sound and effective work in the cause, welcoming and encouraging it as likely to produce those qualities of breadth and grasp which such a training is said to develop. I shall ask you then to consider how far this attitude is justifiable, how far this trust in a system has been well placed

After all, it is the old question, the same keenly fought debate, the strife between Hebraism and Hellenism. But is the word "strife" apt? Are we confronted with two wholly irreconcilable ideals? Are we not perhaps just a little vague in our use of terms? And when we say "Hellenic" ideals, is it not really, subconsciously almost, mediævalism that is at the back of our minds, that wondrous graft of a Christian growth on to a Pagan

stock, that sweet exotic which we inevitably associate with all that is fair and short-lived, yet ineffective and impracticable, some "beautiful and ineffectual angel," as Matthew Arnold admirably said in speaking of Shelley? But Hellenism is something far different from this, and, I venture to submit, if I have rightly understood the spirit of University teaching, that it is something nearer the true Hellenism than this conflation of Hellenism and mediævalism so often mistaken for it. But before I pass to the larger and more general influence of what may be, for purposes of convenience, labelled Westernism, I shall consider how this constant and intimate contact with the way the Greeks thought and acted is likely to react upon our Zionism.

I think that at this stage I owe you both a retrospective and a prospective apology for my rather wearisome technicality, and for what may seem to you a morbid and irrelevant tendency to dwell too lingeringly on a subject to which we as Zionists ought to have nothing to say. After all, you may argue, and perhaps not wrongly, our business is with Jewish acts and thoughts; let us master these first; this is the pressing need. But we should, I think, remember that a comparatively large section of us, a section to whom Zionism and its practical application is all in all, are breathing an atmosphere which some have held to be inimical to the very essentials of Judaism and irreconcilable with them. This then will be sufficient justification for me if I try to show you what I conceive to be the true purport and message of Hellenism, and next, that the two ideas are subservient and complementary to each other.

It is a frequent intellectual vice to label different ideas by one name which is made to do yeoman service. Thus Hellenism is by no means such a solid and congruous thing as many would have it. Hellenism is divided

into two distinct camps, each standing for a great idea, a contrary idea. On the one side we have the Attics, who stand for individuality, self-sufficiency, freedom; on the other the Dorics, who stand for community, subordination, control. The antithesis is between subjectivism and objectivism. As we might expect, the Attic spirit produces mighty leaders, dominant personalities. The history of Athens is the history of her great men. On the other hand we find the common rule for all, the subordination of man to idea, of individual to state; here all the emphasis is thrown upon the high level of average ability, while, outstanding preeminence is discouraged. Now we Jews are told that we have no civic sense, and the taunt has been levelled in particular at Zionists. What are we to understand by this? Surely not that it is beyond our power to make good citizens. That, I think, is hard to square with the teaching of experience all over the world for the last hundred years. Are we then to dismiss the charge as empty and meaningless, and say outright that there is no vestige of truth and soundness in it? No; It seems to me that our critics, though they have failed to embody their charge in an adequate and comprehensive phrase, yet have got the right idea. Let us ask ourselves whether, after all, we are not too subjective, too prone to emphasise individuality in the parts and not in the whole? We too must beware lest our history becomes the history of our great men. The mighty oak stands out firm and true, but it also overshadows the humbler growths. This is our danger. And it was this danger, the result of the worst aspect of the Greek spirit, that the choicest spirits of old strove to counteract. Above all the clash and discord of jarring notes of thought rises the divine music of Plato and Aristotle, serene and sweetly majestic. They are the true Dorians, and ultimately the true Greeks. They are not unworthy then, these teachers at whose feet we would sit, and

their lesson is a noble one. To be a disciplined, restrained, energetic whole, is this not a superb idea? This is what we need at this stage of our history. We must beware lest our excellencies, as with Athens of old, prove our most dangerous enemies. Adaptability, nimbleness, resource, these things are well enough in their way. But there are some virtues whose poise is delicate, and which can soon assume the baser aspect of positive vices; hence we get these meaner qualities of dependence, servility, adulation, which mark a distressingly large section of our people. No; we will have nothing to say to this perversion of the Greek spirit. But to the message of the real Hellenism, product of that nation which has gone hand in hand with Israel through the desert of barbarism and waste, to this we will lend a ready ear. And if Hellenism means a straightening up of the back, a willingness to merge oneself in a cause, to restrain and repress individual ambition in order to ensure a truer harmony and regularity for the whole, we shall do well to learn its lesson. It seems, then, that it is the University which brings us into such intimate contact with this austere self-repression, this dignified monasticism, so necessary to effect the tempering and moderation of that exuberance of the Jewish mind which has before now fallen a victim to its own excellence. Cannot we say that this discipline of ours has received its justification, if it stimulates our enthusiasm for a cause and gives us a clearer understanding of the principles which must lead a movement such as ours to a successful issue?

Let me trespass on your valuable time for a few moments longer in order to bring to your notice what I consider to be one of the dangers of the English University system. When I said that the University atmosphere, and in particular the knowledge that it encouraged of all that is best in

Hellenism, did stimulate and foster national consciousness and aided its practical effectiveness, I was thinking mainly of the cases where such a germ lay ready for development. But there is a type coming up yearly, especially to Oxford and Cambridge, in increasing numbers, which is likely to prove a source of the gravest anxiety to all those who have the welfare of Judaism, be it Zionistic or religious Judaism, at heart. We are all familiar with the last of Mr. Zangwill's masterly studies of "Dreamers of the Ghetto," "Chad Gadya." In that fine piece the writer draws us a picture of a Jew who has seen "many men and many cities," and has found the vexation of much study and much thinking; he returns home to find that the hopes and beliefs of his fathers no longer convey any meaning to him. His Judaism has been succeeded by a vague cosmopolitanism; he epitomises, in fact, the tragedy of the Jew subjected to the unfairly heavy pressure of Western influences. It is this type which is manifestly and incontestably on the increase at Oxford and Cambridge. They tend to form an æsthetic cosmopolitanism of their own, and stand outside of the forces that are at work among us. The tragic fact is that, from the purely utilitarian point of view, they are just the people whom we can least afford to lose, to say nothing of the larger and more solemn question of national responsibility. And if the University Zionist has a function at all, it is surely to concern himself with these men, because he is in their midst, and is brought into close contact with them in the recurring experiences of daily life. We must try our utmost to save something from this wreckage of our own, this flotsam and jetsam of the sea of thought,

Out of all the multitude of ideals, who shall set up the standard and dare to say that his is the ultimately true? We can but hope that when it shall be

given us to see, then what we have been fighting for may appear to approximate to the right. So long as we are sincere, let us fight on. Wherefore, let none blame us if we try to make our own kin sharers in our work, brother-soldiers in the army which is bound for the Land of Promise.

THE NEED FOR EMANCIPATION

By LEON SIMON.

"The emancipated Jew" is a concept with which we are all familiar. As soon as we begin to think about Jews at all, we draw a clear distinction between the Jew who talks and dresses and acts for the most part like an Englishman, and the Jew who, in spite of outward similarities is yet something different from an Englishman. Then, partly as the result of wider experience, and partly by a natural generalisation, we arrive at the conclusion that in all countries where Jews live there are some Jews who resemble the non-Jewish inhabitants, and some who do not; and we apply a distinctive epithet to the Jews of the former class. If we look simply at the fact of resemblance to the non-Jews, we call them "assimilated;" if we go behind this fact to its cause, we call them "emancipated": meaning thereby that they owe the possibility of this assimilation to their "emancipation" from the Ghetto restrictions, which applied all but universally to Jews throughout the Western world for some centuries before the era of Moses Mendelssohn.

Thus the term "emancipated" in this connection means primarily "freed from the political, social and intellectual restrictions of the Ghetto." But it has also a further connotation. The absence of active participation in the life outside is not the only distinguishing feature of the life of the Ghetto. Within the Ghetto walls there has been developed a very distinctive type of life, which we may call, without further particularisation, the life of Jewish observance. Now "Jewish observance," in the Ghetto sense, involves conformity to a large number of regulations, which, while they are quite in accord with the spiritual atmosphere of the Ghetto, appear to be to a large extent incompatible with the ways of life and of thought that prevail in the world outside.

This is not the place to discuss the question whether that incompatibility is fundamental and inevitable, or not; but certain it is that, as a matter of fact, the Jew who has come under the influence of non-Jewish life does very often discard a great many practices which are considered essential in the Ghetto. And so the term "emancipated Jew" carries with it, by implication if not expressly, the idea of a Jew who has departed to a more or less complete extent from Jewish tradition. The Jew who, while "emancipated" in the sense that he mixes on terms of equality with non-Jews, and has assimilated non-Jewish culture and non-Jewish habits, yet remains faithful to this Jewish tradition, is regarded as an exception.

The emancipated Jew, then, is not only beyond the reach of the restrictions which most nations have imposed at one time or another on the Jews under their control; he is also largely beyond the reach of specifically Jewish influences. He is not only emancipated from the Ghetto walls and the yellow badge; he is emancipated from the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch.

Now we have only to look at these facts from a different point of view in order to see that this "emancipation" may be described with equal truth as slavery. In so far as the Jew, when set free from the Ghetto restrictions, abandons Jewish tradition, and assimilates himself to his new surroundings, he does so because the non-Jewish influences to which he is exposed are too strong for his Jewish individuality. Brought into contact with certain forms of life and ways of thinking which have been developed by an alien race, he knuckles under—not so much because the alien life is absolutely better than the Jewish (in most cases the emancipated Jew has not sufficient knowledge of Jewish life to enable him to make the comparison), as because, even if he wants to resist the forces that are brought to bear

on him, he is powerless to do so. It may be questioned, as I said before, whether the powerlessness is absolute and inevitable in the case of those every-day observances which occur to our minds most readily when we think of "Jewish life." But that term really includes a host of other things which must necessarily be more or less completely neglected by the emancipated Jew. Let me take, as an instance, the Jewish civil law, and as a particular case in that field, the Jewish law of divorce. The Jewish law of divorce may be good or bad; but at least it *is* the Jewish law on the subject, and, if the Jews were free, it would be binding on Jews until it was amended by them. But in practice the emancipated Jew is bound to conform, in this matter as in others, to a different law—to the law of the land in which he lives. And what applies to law applies in some degree to every department of life. The emancipated Jew is either compelled to surrender absolutely to his alien environment; or, in those cases where he can make some sort of a stand for his way of life, he has a hard and thankless struggle. In a word, he is a slave to his environment.

Emancipation, then, has brought in its train a slavery less outwardly marked, but not less real, than that from which it freed the Jews. And the slavery of the emancipated Jew is more dangerous, in that the restrictions which it involves are felt rather as crowns than as chains. It is only when his dormant national feeling awakes in the emancipated Jew that he appreciates the fact of his own slavery: that he sees how completely he is bounded and circumscribed by the limits reached by the development of the alien people whose civilisation he enjoys; that he sees, also, how unworthy and degrading is the position of a man who is content to reap the reward of centuries of labour on the part of other people, to make use of their language, their political institutions, their moral conceptions, and yet not to

become really one of them, but to insist on maintaining a claim, based on the services to humanity performed by his ancestors thousands of years ago, to a separate identity. And then he sees that there is need of a further emancipation.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that any real emancipation from this subservience to foreign modes of life and thought will only be possible when the Jews have once more a land of their own. Only on our own soil can we create our own conditions in accordance with our own national individuality. I do not propose to labour this point, because I am concerned here rather with the present position of the emancipated Jew than with the future of our race. Let us therefore go back a little and examine somewhat more in detail the nature of the influences which militate against the maintenance and development of a specifically Jewish individuality in non-Jewish surroundings, and the nature of the weapons, if any, with which the Jew is, or might be, armed to fight against these influences.

We Zionists, and a great many people who are not Zionists, are in the habit of maintaining that the antidote of assimilation is "Jewish culture." That is a thesis which I have no wish to dispute; but we are apt, I think, to detract from its truth and its value by a narrow interpretation of the word "culture." What is it that is ordinarily understood by the "culture" of, let us say, an Englishman? It is not difficult to answer this question sufficiently for our present purpose. The cultured Englishman is familiar with the literary and artistic products of his own nation, and in some degree also with those of other nations which have influenced, or come into contact with, the English. Figuratively speaking he rubs shoulders with Shakespeare and Milton, Michael Angelo and Turner, Beethoven and Wagner, perhaps also Homer and Virgil and Plato and Thucydides.

These, and a host of other creative artists, have helped in the fashioning of his mind; their works are all elements in the sum-total of his "culture." Now, if we interpret "English culture" in something like this sense, it is quite clear that "English culture" is a thing in which the great majority of Englishmen have no direct interest. What does "the man in the street" know about Shakespeare and Turner? His art and his literature are more likely to be found in the "Police Budget" and the "sporting" edition of a halfpenny evening paper. And yet, if we use the term "culture" in a broader sense, we can legitimately speak of an "English culture" which moulds and is moulded by the whole body of Englishmen. The elements of this culture are very simple. One of them—and a most important one—is the English language, with which the child draws into his being from the very outset certain characteristic habits of thought. And other elements are the sights and sounds of every-day life—the English home with its conventional arrangement and furniture, the typical village street with its cottages and public-house, or again the town street with its advertisement boardings, its roaring motor-buses and its many public-houses: these, and a myriad other things, exert influences which mould the English child unconsciously, and help to develop him into that specific type of man which we call "Englishman." In this way we may figure to ourselves "English culture" as something which is essentially the property of every member of the English race.

The bearing on our present subject of this distinction between the two meanings of "culture" is obvious. If we try to fight the tendency to assimilation by means of "Jewish culture" in the narrower sense alone, we cannot hope to achieve very much, because, so far as emancipated Jews are concerned, Jewish culture in that sense can only become the property of a few. It is much less likely to enter into the lives of the masses of "emancipated" Jews than is English culture, in the nar-

rower sense, to enter into the lives of the mass of Englishmen: for the English Jew, if his tastes lie in the direction of culture at all, will inevitably pursue primarily the culture of the Englishman, and will give at best a secondary place to specifically Jewish culture. But even if every cultured Jew were cultured in the Jewish sense—in the sense of having a knowledge of his own language and literature and history—we should still have to reckon with the fact that the majority of people have not the intellectual qualities, or the natural bent, to make them pursue any culture, strictly so called, at all. For the majority, then, we need, if we are to resist the overwhelming influences of non-Jewish surroundings, a “Jewish culture” in the broader sense—a culture which shall consist of specifically Jewish elements to whose influence all alike are amenable, and which shall not appeal only to the intellectual or the leisured classes.

There are, of course, the elements of such a culture in Jewish life at the present day. The home of the Jew has its specific characteristics no less than that of the Englishman. The *Mezuzah*; the candles, and the white table-cloth of Friday night; the ceremonies associated with the festivals; even the fried fish and the “Jewish Chronicle,” those last observances of the assimilated—all these have their part in the moulding of the young Jewish mind in a direction which is specifically Jewish: and their influence is not to be despised, though it is heavily discounted by the facts that they only exist side by side with the more numerous and omnipresent influences of a non-Jewish kind, and that the supreme influence—that of language—must of necessity be lacking. Nor is it out of place to mention here that the Zionist movement has done something to add to the stock of this broader “Jewish culture.” For the rising generation the box and stamp of the National Fund, the Zionist shekel, and so forth, have become, though not to

the fullest extent as yet, part of the environment of Jewish life; these, too, may be numbered among the subtle threads which bind the Jewish fabric together. And in the case of the adult also, Zionism can put forward a similar claim. Even outside the ranks of Zionists the conceptions of Jewish nationalism, of Jewish politics as distinguished from Anglo-Jewish or Franco-Jewish politics, of Palestine as a field for Jewish work, have become part of the mental equipment of emancipated Jews; part of a "Jewish culture," in the broader sense, which cannot fail of its effect.

When, therefore, we set about counteracting the evils of assimilation by spreading Jewish culture—when, in other words, we endeavour to emancipate the emancipated Jew—we must not lose sight of the importance of all these forces. The Jewish home is at least as strong an influence on our side as the study of Jewish history; a general interest in Jewish politics is as valuable for us as a scholarly interest in Jewish literature. We have to deal with the many, not only with the few: and for the many we must have something of universal appeal. And the real justification of an insistence on "Jewish culture" in the narrower sense lies not in any advantage arising from the possession of certain knowledge by a limited number of Jews. It lies rather in this: that the "cultured" few can, and do, to a large extent create an atmosphere for the "uncultured" many; and that only men whose culture is Jewish can create a Jewish atmosphere. For this reason Jewish culture in the strict sense—a knowledge of Hebrew and of Jewish History—is essential for those whose part it is to lead, and more especially for those who have to do with the training of the young; not so much in order that they may impart their knowledge to others, as in order that they may be able to assist in producing the broader "Jewish culture," and thus to strengthen the more popular forces which make towards our much-needed spiritual emancipation.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 095 334 9

